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1897.

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A. S. WATSON & CO., LIMITED.

THE HONGKONG DISPENSARY.

Hongkong, 1st January, 1897.

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Correspondents must forward their names and addresses
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The Daily Press.

HONGKONG, FEBRUARY 24th, 1897.

SOME misapprehension appears to exist
with regard to the so-called concession
granted to the Russo-Chinese Railway
Company to the effect that Chinese Customs
dues for imports and exports carried across
the Russian frontier shall be one-third
lower than in the case of sea-borne goods.
Instead of being something new this is
merely a declaration of a previously exist-
ing right. Our contemporary the *Hong-
kong Telegraph*, however, apparently over-
looking the treaty provisions already in
force on the subject, says that "The
Russians are to be congratulated on
"scoring" a great diplomatic success in
"respect of the reduction of Customs dues
"on imports from and exports to Russia by
"the new railway, and it is a question
"whether the thanks of all foreigners
"interested in the trade with China
"are not due to the shrewd representa-
"tive of the Czar in Peking who, "over
"over on the alert to strike when China
"should be unable to refuse to consent to
"his overtures, however unpleasant, has
"thus obtained a great concession that may
"be rendered beneficial to all nations in
"view of the fact that the "most favoured
"nation" clauses of the treaties can no
"doubt, be made operative in the premises.
"It would be manifestly unfair, and opposed
"to the spirit of the "favoured nation"
"clauses of the treaties, to admit Russian
"goods one-third lower than sea-borne
"goods and levy the usual dues on all
"sea-borne goods at the same time, for
"were this done the Russians and Chinese
"trading under Russian auspices, could
"undercut all who failed to use the railway.
"We trust to learn in due course
"that Sir Claude MacDonald has not
"been slow to take every advantage of the
"opening which such great concessions
"assuming the reports to be true, to Russia
"unquestionably entails. One thing
"is clear and it is that if Russia has
"obtained the right to import and export
"by the Manchurian railway on payment of
"one-third less duty than is payable at the
"Chinese Customs-house on goods imported
"and exported by steamers, then the
"British Minister should decline to discuss
"any further the proposal of the Chinese

"Government to raise the import duties
"from 5 to 10 per cent and *ad valorem*."

If our contemporary had been aware of
the facts of the case it would have
dealt with the matter on a different line of
argument, though probably it would equally
have arrived at the conclusion that it is
manifestly unfair that goods arriving by
one route should be charged less than
goods arriving by another. Unfortunately,
however, Great Britain, in common with
France and Russia, has already conceded
this dangerous principle. In the Russian
Convention of 1862 for the regulation of the
land trade it is provided that "Russian
"merchants transporting Russian mer-
"chandise shall on their arrival at Tientsin
"pay import duty at the rate of one-third
"less than that specified in the general
"foreign tariff." In the French Convention
of 1887 it is agreed that in order to develop
the trade between China and Tonkin
as rapidly as possible foreign goods imported
into Yunnan and Kwangsi from Tonkin shall
pay only 70 per cent of the import duties
collected by the Customs at the Coast Ports
in China. Proceeding on the same lines, in
the Burmah Convention of 1894, with a view
to the development of trade between China
and Burmah, the Chinese Government con-
sents that for six years from the ratification
of the Convention the duties levied
on goods imported into China by the
Burmah route shall be those specified in the
general tariff of the Maritime Customs re-
duced by three-fourths. There are cor-
responding provisions with respect to the
export trade, only there the reduction is
still greater. Great Britain having thus ac-
cused a special concession to herself in the
way of a remission of duty on merchandise
conveyed by a particular route is not in a
position to oppose the continuance of con-
cessions of the same nature previously
granted to other Powers.

The concessions referred to, however,
were granted when railways were still in
their infancy and the distant future
Now we have railways reaching out their
arms towards China from the North and the
South. Whether a difference of one-third
in the Customs dues chargeable on goods
will have any material influence in direct-
ing the present sea-borne trade of the
Twenty Ports to the railways when they
are completed may be doubtful, but in the
competition of rival routes every cent in the
way of charges must tell to some extent.
If it be found that a large volume of
trade is developed by the railways China
in the interests of her own revenue would
naturally desire an equalization of the duties
and would have a good case for opening
negotiations to that effect with the Powers
concerned, representing that under the
changed conditions the special agreements
have ceased to be equitable, they having
been arrived at when land carriage was slow
and costly and the trade unable to bear the
same duties as sea-borne trade. Under the
present circumstances, however, it is hardly
open to invoke the favoured nation clause,
certainly not to Great Britain, in view of
the Burmah Convention. What might be
done, perhaps, is to advance a claim for a
reduction of duty on goods conveyed by the
Wu-wei River route, which is to be opened if
the French are allowed to import goods into
China by the Red River at a reduction of
thirty per cent on the general tariff of the
Maritime Customs, yet not grant a similar
concession to the trade of all nations by the
West River route? We have not much
expectation of this view being adopted, but
it seems a very reasonable one.

Smallpox cases prevalent in Tonkin.

The P. & O. steamer *Ceylon* left Singapore
for this port yesterday at noon.

The C. P. steamer *Empress of India*, from
Hongkong, arrived at Kowloon yesterday
at 3.30 p.m. and left at 12.30 p.m.
on Wednesday, the 24th instant, for Vancouver
B.C., via Yokohama.

According to a Bangkok letter to the *Courier*,
the King of Siam has conferred the
title of Chao Phya on two Javanese.
Chao Phya is a title of nobility corresponding
to that of Duke. M. Rollin-Jacquemotte, the
French Consul, has also been elevated to the rank
of Chao Phya in recognition of his services to
the French Government.

The annual meeting and dinner of the
Dorchester Society, which was held at the
Horseshoe Club on Tuesday evening, the 23rd
instant, was a large and successful one.
Twenty-two members sat down to dinner;
Admiral Sir Alexander Duff, K.C.B., in the
chair and Mr. R. E. M. Jones, in the
vice-chair. The Rev. Canon, the Rev. Canon
of Devon, the Rev. Canon of Devon, the
Hon. Secretary, a few songs and
Devotional songs brought to a close a very
pleasant social evening.

The session of the College of Medicine for
Chinese commenced on the 1st March. From
a note of the arrangements circulated for the
information of the Court and Senate we learn
that the following are the lecturers: Dr. Clark,
physiology and hygiene; Dr. Kenna, midwifery;
Dr. Carver, pathology; Dr. Paine, anatomy;
Dr. Jordan, medicine; Mr. Fisher, botany;
Senior students, osteology. About fourteen
students will commence the session.

Halfpenny has been running itself with a "fale
demonstration" at the club in the afternoon
proceeding took place. At the head was a dwarf
with a drum-major's staff; next came seven
trumpeters, and then a group of gypsies in
grotesque costumes, followed by twenty-five
and an orchestra composed by the children,
all in fancy dress. The procession having
passed through the streets in good order,
arrived at the club at 7.30, where a large
fellow was playing in one of the rooms.
The children, which were dressed in
fancy costumes, and the "grown-ups" were
affected by the fact that a suggestion to
resume the dance at 10 o'clock, after the
ones had been put to bed, was promptly
and an undisturbed ball was held which
continued until 2 o'clock next morning. In the
presence Mr. Jack's carriage, containing his
children, was going up in a will when one
of the children, who was in the carriage, was
in a very bad condition in the character of a
merry Negro.

The M. M. steamer *West Simons* left Saigon
yesterday at 9 p.m.

Professor Price's lecture on the subject of
"The History of the World" will take place at the
Happy Valley on Monday at 7.30 p.m.

The Hon. Treasurer of the Anglo-Manchester
and Manchester Hospitals has acknowledged
with thanks the following donations to the
Hospitals:—
Holidays, Wills & Co. £100.
Wei Lun Shek £25.

Messrs. Kohn and Kohn yesterday received
at their store in Queen's Road a beautiful
set of the wall known as the "Halls of
Nikola" and the other saint bridge.
The set is the first of its kind that has ever been
shown in Hongkong and it is a magnificent
specimen of artistic workmanship of the old
masters, the scene being a "most realistic
picture."

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